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TTY USERS CALL VIA MD RELAY

June 4, 2004

Admiral James D. Watkins, Chair  
U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy  
1120 20th St., NW  
Suite 200 North  
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Admiral Watkins:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Preliminary Report of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy (Report). My compliments to you, the Commissioners and staff for your exemplary work in producing the Report. The ideas and recommendations put forward in the Report clearly document the challenging course that lies ahead of us if we are to untangle policies described by the Report as "disparate, confusing, and single-issue governance tools." We must eliminate the confusion and contradictions that have resulted from this unworkable policy approach.

A national ocean policy is an essential foundation for the development of an ocean governance model particularly if that policy recognizes, supports, and assists the states in implementing frontline management of the coastal zone.

The State of Maryland's comments on the Report reflect the work of an interagency task force that I directed to be formed in anticipation of the release of the Report. Nine State agencies, the Maryland Office of the Attorney General, and the Coastal and the Watershed Resources Advisory Committee reviewed the report with more than sixty individual reviewers involved in this effort. The State's specific comments on the recommendations of the Report are contained in the attachment. The comments reflect the direct experience and expertise of decades of involvement in coastal management.

The State of Maryland concurs with the goals of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy (Commission) for clean, safe and sustainably managed oceans and coasts. We endorse the efforts to achieve ecosystem-based management supported by sound science, effective governance mechanisms, and an informed public. Maryland has been using this management approach for many years especially with regard to the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay and its coastal bays. We welcome the development of a clear and consistent national policy to assist states in achieving coordinated management of our nation's coastal and ocean resources.

As the Commission prepares to finalize its recommendations for the President and Congress, I respectfully request that you consider several themes throughout your deliberations:

- *The need to incorporate state and local perspectives into the development and implementation of federal plans and programs.* States have the primary responsibility for the protection of our coastal and nearshore resources. Little can happen to reverse the course of the decline in these resources without the direct and substantial participation of the states and local governments that are the frontline managers of the coastal zone. Enhanced partnerships through increased federal support, rather than under-funded prescriptive and punitive approaches, are needed to advance more effective coastal and ocean management. I commend the Commission for soliciting state's input for inclusion in the Final Report.
- *The need to build upon existing programs.* The Report's focus on the need to improve coastal and ocean resource management obscures how much has been accomplished in the relatively short period of the last thirty years. Much of what has been accomplished has been through states that serve as laboratories for innovation. On-going efforts will yield further progress. Federal assistance to strengthen these efforts to see them to fulfillment should be made a priority over adding new programs, layers of bureaucracy, or additional demands upon states.
- *The need to prioritize among the broad suite of recommendations presented in the Report.* Establishing budgetary priorities among the recommendations and the development of a strategic framework for funding and implementation are essential. Without this focus, the attainment of effective national policies and governance will not be achieved. The foremost priority of the Commission, Congress and the Administration should be ensuring that those recommendations that will make the most substantial and immediate difference in improving the environment and quality of life in our coastal communities are undertaken as soon as possible. There are critical needs, opportunities, and plans in place that cannot wait. One of the greatest needs is to provide commensurate funding to state and local governments as regulations are amended and implemented to address future demands.

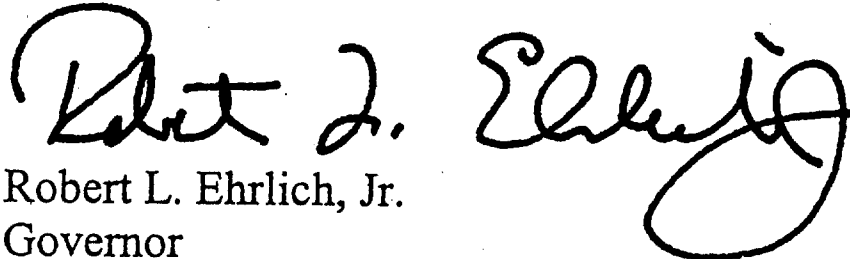
The Report is only a starting point in the realization of improved coastal and ocean management. An on-going dialogue with Maryland and other coastal states is essential to filling in the many details. We recognize that this is an enormous undertaking and we look forward to being a willing and committed partner to fulfill the intent of the Oceans Act of 2000. To this end, Maryland is ready to work with the Commission and the appropriate federal agencies to build a unified strategy to gain support for improved coastal and ocean resource management.

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Admiral Watkins

I have requested our Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources, C. Ronald Franks, to be the point of contact for matters relating to the Commission. Please call on him if we can be of assistance to the Commission.

Again, I thank you for your work on behalf of our oceans. I look forward to seeing the Final Report.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr.", with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr.  
Governor